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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIRKUK 000034

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DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR DS/IP/NEA, BAGHDAD FOR POL, POLMIL, RSO, NCT

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: (U) PUK DEMONSTRATION AT REO KIRKUK

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CLASSIFIED BY: DEAN, Acting Regional Coordinator, REO Kirkuk, US
Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (SBU) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: On February 12, PRT Kirkuk Deputy Team Leader, IPAO and RSO met with Provincial Council Chairman and Kirkuk PUK leader Rizgar Ali at the REO. The subject was the February 7 shooting incident in which a REO PSD shot and killed a taxi driver and one of his passengers and wounded another passenger in the Kurdish neighborhood of Rahimawa, Kirkuk. Later, a peaceful demonstration of about 100 people that Ali may have organized arrived and PRT staff held a joint meeting with a delegation of six of them, including two of the victims' relatives, and Rizgar Ali. The demonstrators wanted an apology, compensation and an investigation into the incident. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

(SBU) RIZGAR ALI PLAYING IT UP FOR ALL ITS WORTH

12. (SBU) Rizgar Ali's visit to the REO compound underlined the gravity of the situation, as it was only his second time here in as many months. (He has been reluctant to come to the REO.) Concerning the incident, Ali said:

-- It is imperative that the relationship between the U.S. and the Kurds be maintained. However, this is the third deadly shooting incident involving Coalition forces or personnel in Kirkuk in the recent past.

-- This last incident in Rahimawa is very difficult for the Kurds of Kirkuk to accept. Some 2,000 households there lost family members in the struggle against Saddam.

-- Most people in Rahimawa are Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) members and the PUK has worked to keep the situation calm. Feelings are still running high in Rahimawa and the families are still in the mourning period.

-- The Provincial Council Security Committee will start an investigation into this incident.

-- It is not necessary to compensate them just yet. That can wait until later. It would be better to wait a few days and then have a meeting with the families, some Provincial Council members and some clerics at which an apology can be given.

-- There are several hundred protestors coming here by bus and

will be here shortly. But we have party members on the buses to keep them calm. Most of them are my relatives or people I know.

(U) DEMONSTRATORS WANT APOLOGY, COMPENSATION

¶3. (SBU) At circa 1100 hours a crowd of about 100-odd men bearing banners came to within 100 meters of the outer entrance to the REO. The crowd chanted, "What do you want, Kurdish people? We need our martyrs' blood." They were peaceful and stayed behind the crowd barrier. A six-person delegation that included two relatives of the victims was allowed into the REO to meet with PRT Deputy Team Leader, IPAO, RSO and Rizgar Ali.

¶4. (SBU) Rizgar Ali opened the meeting by underlining the importance of the U.S.-Kurdish relationship and U.S. sacrifices in freeing Iraq from Saddam. The PRT Deputy Team Leader extended his condolences to the families of the victims. In reply, the members of the delegation said:

-- We want an apology for what happened and recommend an open investigation of it and compensation, as the victims left needy family members.

-- The U.S. should recognize that Rahimawa is a safe neighborhood and change its security procedures accordingly so as not to repeat this mistake.

-- We ask for fair compensation.

¶5. (C) PRT Deputy Team Leader and RSO later met with the victims' relatives and the head of the police for the precinct. The police captain, an Arab, said the Kurds had politicized the issue and were fanning the flames. By contrast, the families seemed amenable to a settlement, though not yet satisfied.

(U) COMMENT

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¶6. (C) There was a certain amount of theater in today's events. The actual victims were members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), but lived in a PUK neighborhood. Each party has been trying to elbow past the other to show it is the better defender of the people's interests. The KDP has focused more on getting the families maximum compensation. By contrast, Rizgar Ali may have organized the demonstration and his trip to the REO to demonstrate he can influence the Americans. To show the KDP as ineffectual, he is trying to draw out the resolution of this incident, but without letting anti-American sentiment get out of control. PRT Kirkuk, is working to talk directly to the victims' families and to pay compensation as soon as possible.
DEAN